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ABSTRACT

This paper criticizes federal involvement in education in recent decades and asserts that control of education must be returned to the localities and parents. The document cites damaging effects of centralized education policy in Washington, D.C., noting a decline in academic standards and federal regulations that are ill-suited to local educational needs. False assumptions underlying advocacy of centralized education policies are reviewed, including the concept that the primary responsibility for dealing with an individual's disability lies with the larger political unit rather than with the family and immediate community. The paper points to the examples of Title I/Chapter 1 of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act and disability legislation, including P.L. 94-142, the Education For All Handicapped Children Act, as examples of expensive and ineffective federal initiatives. Recommendations include consideration of vouchers and tuition tax credits, repeal of Chapter 1, abolition of the Department of Education, and use of federal funds as the assistance of last resort rather than as a right. (CL)

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THE EDUCATION CRISIS: WASHINGTON SHARES THE BLAME

INTRODUCTION

That there is a crisis in American education is by now widely acknowledged. Exactly how the crisis is to be resolved, however, is in dispute. Many within the education establishment feel the nation's schools can be improved only with increased federal spending. The evidence, however, argues otherwise. Data from the past three decades demonstrate that, as federal involvement in education has increased, educational quality has plummeted. Between 1950 and 1980, for instance, the federal share of education financing soared threefold. Yet during this same period Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores fell from their 1963 peak by 36 points in mathematics and 54 points in verbal skills.

A major reason for this plunge has been the centralization of education policy making in Washington, D.C. From this power base, special interest groups have maneuvered Congress into creating programs that serve their own narrow ends rather than education's broad mission and are based on a set of unrealistic philosophical assumptions.

The civil rights movement, which sought to provide poor minorities with equality of educational opportunity through such federal programs as Title I, somehow bought the erroneous notion that equality of opportunity is synonymous with equality of outcome. Advocates for the handicapped used the civil rights approach to press Congress to pass The Education for All Handicapped Children Act; it rests on the questionable assumption that the responsibility for disabled individuals is primarily society's--as a civil right--rather than the family's with the help of society.

Such legislation, although enacted by well meaning politicians, has directed funding, attention, and policy to the "special" student. The evidence shows, regrettably, that such programs

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yield minimal positive results for that student and generally damaging results for the normal child. To this, advocates for the special programs turn their backs, denounce the data, and then demand even greater outlays for programs that fail to achieve their goals.

A first step in restoring the nation's educational health must be the dismantling of the power base of the lobbyists--the Department of Education. In addition, special schools should be established to meet the special needs of students (such as the mentally retarded and physically handicapped), who cannot easily be incorporated into a normal school program. These schools can be assisted through vouchers and tuition tax credits. Finally, Title I of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act should be abolished, and the responsibility for educating academically slow students returned to the regular classroom teacher.

Before these reforms can be instituted, the political hammerlock by supporters of ineffective programs must be broken. Critical to this is placing the documented results of these programs before the public and generating a national debate on the merits of centralized versus decentralized educational initiatives. To accomplish this, the President should appoint a national commission, drawn from parents and educators, to hold hearings, review the evidence, and publish a report. Unless the debate is conducted in this way--outside the narrow confines of Congress, where organized interest groups dominate the proceedings--the U.S. will never be able to deal with the needs of handicapped children or slow learners.

THE GROWTH OF THE FEDERAL PRESENCE

Funding

Total spending on public elementary and secondary education for FY 1984 is an estimated $125 billion.[1] This represents nearly 4 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP)--much higher than in most other industrialized nations.[2] Expenditures per pupil have risen dramatically in real terms (adjusted to discount inflation), from an average of $848 in 1950 to $2,228 in 1980 (measured in 1980 dollars).[3] But this has not prompted a rise in standards.

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1 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

2 U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics. When compared to the percentage of the GNP spent on education by other advanced industrial nations, the U.S. leads. The percentage of the GNP spent on K-12 education in Japan is 2.9 percent, in West Germany, 2.8 percent, and in England and France, 2.3 percent. (Calculated from data reported in the UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook, 1982, and personal communication with UNESCO, Bureau of Educational Statistics, Paris.)

3 Warren Brookes, "The NEA Versus Accountability in Public Education," Heritage Features Syndicate (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, July 31, 1983).

Indeed, between 1963, when average SAT scores were at their zenith (math, 502; verbal, 478), and 1983, when they were near their nadir (math, 468; verbal, 425),[4] real dollars spent per student rose by 70 percent.[5] Moreover, a simple regression analysis, performed by the office of Senator John East (R-NC), reveals a significant negative relation betwen federal funding of the schools and performance outcomes. (Chart 1 illustrates this point.)

Centralization

The decline in academic standards also has coincided with greater centralization of funding. In 1950, 57 percent of education funding was provided locally; states contributed 40 percent; the federal government, 3 percent. By 1980-1981, however, the local share had decreased to 43 percent, while the states' share had jumped to 47 percent, and the federal proportion had tripled to 9 percent.[6]

Centralization has meant federal regulations ill-suited to local educational needs. State bureaucracies, meanwhile, invariably mimic the flawed programs and regulations that emanate from Washington. The result has been a general disempowerment of parents, school boards, and other local education agencies--who traditionally have fought to maintain high educational standards.

Questionable Philosophy

Advocates of centralized education policies often argue from three false assumptions:

1) That man's purpose and end are defined by man himself. If man determines his own end, they reason, then equality of result should be attainable by the right legislation. Any failure to attain equal result must therefore be the product of discrimination. Hence they turn to social legislation and court action to force equality of result rather than equality of opportunity.

2) That consensus determines what is right and good, rather than objective standards that have stood the test of time. This

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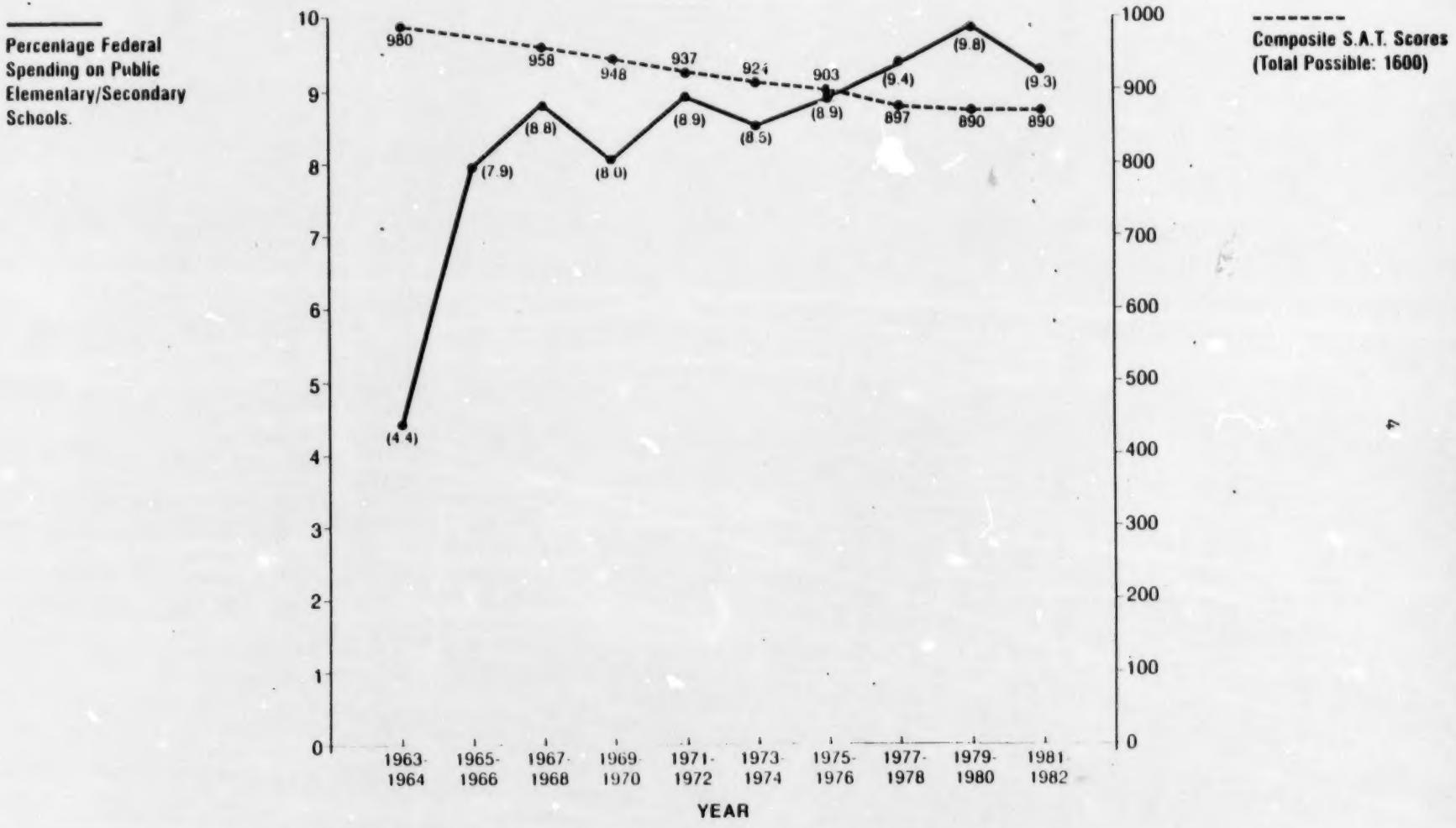
4 The decline in test scores is probably more dramatic than the data indicate. In 1963 the math and verbal SATs represented the average scores of all students taking these tests. Since 1967 the College Board has reported only the scores of college-bound seniors (Education Times, September 16, 1983)--the individuals presumably more academically capable than those who do not attend college. A truer comparison, then, would be between the college-bound seniors of 1963 and the college-bound seniors of 1983.

5 "Education in America. #1 In A Series: Will More Dollars Buy a Better Education?" (Asheboro, North Carolina: Stedman Corporation, 1983).

6 U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics.

Federal Spending & SAT Scores 1963-1982



Source U.S. Department of Education
National Center for Education Statistics

view ultimately repudiates the values and standards upon which a successful education system depends.

3) That the primary responsibility for dealing with an individual's disability lies with the larger political unit, rather than with the family and immediate community. Proponents of this view demand ever larger government programs and denounce their critics as having a wrong attitude toward disability.

Although several federal education programs embody these false assumptions and the steady growth of the federal presence, the two that are most heavily funded and generate the greatest policy debates are Compensatory Education and The Education of the Handicapped. Neither of these programs has achieved its goals, yet the educational establishment has managed to discredit any indication of this failure. They epitomize the triumph of politics over purposeful help to the needy.

CASE EXAMPLE--TITLE I/CHAPTER I

The Rationale

During the 1950s and 1960s, a plethora of studies sought to explain the dramatically inferior academic performance of black children in predominantly black schools. Rejecting all other possible explanations, social science researchers looked at environmental factors. They concluded that blacks were "culturally deprived," due to poverty and racial prejudice.[7] To remedy this, they argued, schools should be transformed into institutions that would achieve equality of result. This, in large part, was the aim of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Title I (now Chapter I)[8] of the Act provides aid to states and school districts for compensatory education for educationally disadvantaged children from low-income families. By 1983, Chapter I programs were receiving $3.2 billion. Cumulative federal spending for compensatory education exceeds over $38 billion.[9] In the FY 1984 budget, $3.5 billion was appropriated. These funds will reach an estimated 90 percent of the school districts in America to serve between 4.5 and 5.5 million children.[10]

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7 Diane Ravitch, The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945-1980 (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), p. 150.

8 Title I was changed to Chapter I in the 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act. The change constituted in large part a reduction of federal regulation requirements for local school districts. (For example, local school districts are no longer required to have parent advisory councils.)

9 White House Report, "Cost Effectiveness of Compensatory Education Programs," 1983.

10 Fairness II: An Executive Briefing Book (White House Office of Policy Information, May 1, 1983), pp. 65-66.

The Results

In the first seven years of Title I, $50 million was spent on evaluating the program.[11] Most of these evaluations were discouraging. The Westinghouse assessment of Head Start in 1969, for example, reported that initial gains made by disadvantaged children in preschool compensatory education programs disappeared in later years.[12] Recently, Stephen P. Mullen of the University of Pennsylvania and Anita A. Summers of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business surveyed the findings of 47 studies on the effectiveness of compensatory education. Their findings reinforce earlier studies. They conclude:

> The results of most studies are overstated because of the upward biases inherent in several standard statistical procedures.
>
> The gains appear to be greater in the earlier years, and the evidence is fairly strong that early gains are not sustained.
>
> No significant association exists between dollars spent and achievement gains.
>
> No approach or program characteristic was consistently found to be effective.[13]

The gains of the remediated educationally slower students thus have been modest at best and may well have been purchased at the expense of academically talented students--that pool of talent from which the nation traditionally has drawn its leadership. Between 1967 and 1975, the number of students scoring above 700 (of a possible 800) on the mathematics section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test declined by 15 percent.[14] From 1979 to 1980 alone, the number of students scoring over 750 fell from 2,650 to 1,892 (verbal) and from 9,059 to 7,675 (mathematics).[15]

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11 Carl F. Kaestle and Marshall S. Smith, "The Federal Role in Elementary and Secondary Education, 1940-1980," Harvard Educational Review, November 1982.

12 Westinghouse Learning Corporation, The Impact of Head Start: An Evaluation of the Effects of Head Start on Children's Cognitive and Affective Development (Washington, D.C.: Clearinghouse for Federal Scientific and Technical Information, June 1969).

13 Stephen P. Mullen and Anita A. Summers, "Is More Better? The Effectiveness of Spending on Compensatory Education," Phi Delta Kappa, January 1983, p. 339.

14 Fact Sheet from the National Convention in Precollege Education in Mathematics and Science, May 12-13, 1982 (Washington, D.C.: National Science Foundation).

15 Solveig Eggerz, Why Our Public Schools are Failing and What We Must Do About It (New Rochelle, New York: America's Future, 1982).

Critics of Chapter I argue that these disappointing results are the inevitable result of a faulty system. They note that most components of the Chapter I program are separated from the regular education program; it has a separate administrative structure and separate teaching personnel; approximately 50 percent of these Chapter I personnel are paraprofessionals who, on the whole, are not as skilled or as knowledgeable as regular school teachers.[16]

By far the strongest criticism leveled against Chapter I is that, in practice, it separates the slow student from the regular classroom. This has labeled the targeted student, and it has weakened the regular teacher's commitment to working with students who require any extra effort. It has muddled the education curriculum,[17] and produced a cadre of special needs personnel whose financial and professional interests lie in maintaining enrollments.

These disturbing results should have led policy makers to examine the assumptions upon which compensatory education was based. Yet during the 1970s they merely shifted their focus from assessing effectiveness to ensuring the money reached the targeted population and that the program was properly implemented.[18] Currently, according to Carl Bereiter of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the "two lines of retreat" from the disappointing study results have been to diagnose individual education problems and to pull all students possible into the compensatory education rubric.[19]

In the early 1970s, the educational establishment reacted by discrediting the standards measuring the program's failure. "We will need to recognize that the so-called 'basic skills,' which currently represent nearly the total effort in elementary schools, will be taught in one quarter of the school day. The remaining time will be devoted to what is truly fundamental and basic," stated Catherine Barrett in 1972 as President of NEA.[20] What was "truly fundamental and basic?" Said the NEA, "Schools [are to become] 'clinics' whose purpose is to provide individualized psychosocial 'treatment' for the student, thus increasing his value both to himself and to society."[21] Academic standards throughout education were lowered or eliminated; substantive academic courses were replaced by courses of highly questionable merit (including interpersonal skills and bachelor living); students were required to know less and less.

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16 Solveig Eggerz, Federal Aid for Social Engineering in the Public Schools (Washington, D.C.: ACU Education and Research Institute, 1976). Personal communication with an official in the Department of Education.

17 Kaestle and Smith, op. cit.

18 Kaestle and Smith, op. cit.

19 Education Daily, May 2, 1984.

20 Eggerz, Federal Aid, op. cit.

21 Forecast for the '70's," Today's Education, NEA Journal (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, January 1969).

Despite the disappointing study results, the obvious difficulties in implementation, and the negative impact on high achievers, Congress appropriated another $3.48 billion for Chapter I in FY 1984.

The comparatively minor, short-term improvement[22] in the scores of the Title I students has been lauded as extraordinary and cited as ample justification for continuing to pour disproportionately high amounts of federal dollars into compensatory education programs. Studies that question the programs are dismissed or used as arguments for the programs' extension; critics are denounced as being insensitive to the needs of the disadvantaged; and localities opting not to use federal funds for compensatory education are attacked as irresponsible. Indeed, the assumption that the federal government and its partners--the special interest lobbyists--know what is best for American education has even prompted a move, championed by Secretary of Education Terrel Bell, to earmark block grant funds specifically for compensatory education programs. Thus, the centralized education structure provides a continuing power base for those wishing to extend programs that have yielded costly but disappointing results.

CASE EXAMPLE--EDUCATION OF THE HANDICAPPED

The Rationale

Education of the handicapped programs are also examples of how facts and results are dismissed when a powerful lobby group dominates a centralized system of education. The 1954 Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education had a profound impact on subsequent legislation and court decisions regarding the handicapped. Brown established the civil right of every school-aged child to a "quality" education and the principle that de jure segregation of any kind works against this goal.

During the early 1960s, the parents of handicapped children were concentrating their efforts at the state and local levels. Their goal was to use civil rights arguments to place all handicapped children in publicly supported education programs and to train special teachers to staff these programs.[23] In the late 1960s, Washington became the focus of these efforts. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act empowers federal officials to withdraw federal funds from any program that violates antidiscrimination laws and regulations.

The Campaign

The campaign was impressive. It had money and public sympathy, and it claimed the moral high ground.[24] Skillful lobbying

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22 It would take a very large gain at the low end to offset a small loss at the upper.

23 Ravitch, op. cit., p. 306.

24 Ibid., p. 307.

led to the establishment of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (BEH) as the primary agency for administering and carrying out the education and training programs for the handicapped.[25] Congress also created the National Advisory Committee on Education and Training of the Handicapped. As intended, both became "advocacy agencies for the handicapped within the federal government."[26] From this base, the lobby succeeded in 1970 in increasing federal aid for education of the handicapped to include learning disabilities--thereby further strengthening the constituency.

Emboldened by their success with Congress, the handicapped constituency next turned to the courts. Pennsylvania was sued. In a landmark decision by a federal court in 1971 (PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania), the state was ordered to provide a free public education for all retarded children in the state.[27] A second, broader federal court decision in the District of Columbia the following year triggered similar decisions elsewhere. At least two recent state court rulings have mandated year-round schooling for handicapped children to be paid for by the school districts.

The campaign took another significant step forward in 1973, when Congress passed the Rehabilitation Act. Section 504, echoing the Civil Rights Act, "prohibits any program or activity receiving Federal assistance from discriminating against any persons because of a handicapping condition."[28] It requires public schools to teach handicapped children alongside their regular school peers if possible. Schools must also make available to handicapped children all extracurricular activities available to the non-handicapped; pay for all nonmedical expenses if the district places a handicapped child in a residential school; and make "reasonable accommodation" to employ handicapped teachers.[29]

There was considerable opposition to these costly regulations. President Richard Nixon vetoed the bill, but Congress overrode the veto, thanks to the "iron triangle" formed between the handicapped constituency, the staff and members of congressional education committees, and the federal agency staff administering programs for the handicapped.[30]

The power of the triangle was further demonstrated in 1975 by passage of Public Law 94-142, the "Education for All Handicapped Children Act." This requires states and local districts

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25 Report of the Committee on Governmental Affairs, op. cit., p. 44.
26 Ravitch, op. cit., p. 307.
27 John Pittenger and Peter Kuriloff, "Educating the Handicapped: Reforming a Radical Law," Public Interest, vol. 65-66, 1981-82, pp. 76-78.
28 Angela Evans, "Education of the Handicapped," Issue Brief #1B78040, Congressional Research Service, December 7, 1982.
29 Education Daily, August 30, 1972, p. 5.
30 Ravitch, op. cit., p. 308.

to afford every handicapped child within their jurisdictions (between the ages of 3 and 21) a "free and appropriate public education" in the "least restrictive environment" (meaning wherever possible placing handicapped children in the same classroom with nonhandicapped--mainstreaming--with pull-out supplemental instruction for the handicapped students). In what a prominent educator has called "one of the sharpest intrusions of the federal government into the details of the teaching practice,"[31] every teacher of a handicapped child is required to write an Individualized Education Program for that child. P.L. 94-142 also sets up elaborate due process procedures, which encourage parents to initiate litigation whenever they are dissatisfied with a teacher's or school's handling of their child.

The Results

However noble the motivation behind these requirements may have been, they actually have reduced the effectiveness of the education that many handicapped children once received.[32] Special needs students, accustomed to individualized programs, are placed in regular classrooms. These special students, predictably, are often tormented and teased, because of their emotional problems, mental retardation, or physical disabilities.[33] Valuable teacher time is spent on the highly questionable activity of filling out IEPs. Furthermore, opening pupil records and encouraging parents to challenge record content has led to the removal of much of the information the teacher needs to give the child an effective education.

P.L. 94-142 requires school districts to pay for "related services" without considering the income of the parents of the handicapped child. These services include the elimination of architectural barriers (installing elevators in some cases), hiring specially trained personnel (for example, psychologists, physical therapists, therapeutic recreation specialists, diagnostic personnel, and supervisors), the payment of private school tuition for those children who cannot be taught in public school--indeed, whatever a court decides.[34]

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31 Statement of Myron Atkin, Dean of Education, Stanford University, in Ravitch, p. 317.

32 The author has six years experience teaching handicapped children.

33 Advocates for the handicapped have said that these "initial" adjustment problems in the main have been solved. Whether this is so, however, is debatable. Individual regular and resource room teachers still describe the mainstreaming effort as "problematic" and "disastrous." Protests from the normal school population may have been quelled by an unprecedented move to draw this population into the ranks of the handicapped through a "learning disabilities" label. Evidence seems to indicate that many normal children are being labeled handicapped and pulled out of their regular classrooms for "remediation."

34 Subpart B (State Annual Program Plans and Local Applications), P.L. 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act.

A 1981 report by Education Turnkey Systems, Inc. (a Virginia-based firm that conducts research and evaluations for federal, state, and local agencies) described the expenditures of states and localities on special services to handicapped children as "uncontrollable." Evidence indicates that 25 percent of one "state's local school transportation budget is spent on handicapped children who make up only 3 percent of the total school population."[35] To meet the towering and disproportionate costs of complying with handicapped regulations, many states and local school districts have reduced services to normal school children.

There has also been a dramatic increase in the number of children labeled Learning Disabled (LD) since P.L. 94-142 was enacted--the figure jumped 119 percent, for instance, between 1977 and 1983.[36] There are four possible explanations for this:

1) Mentally retarded (MR) children are re-labeled LD to avoid the MR label. The increase in LD students has indeed coincided with a decrease in the number of children served as mentally retarded.[37]

2) Normal children are labeled LD so that school districts can receive more state and federal money. Says Harold Voth, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Kansas and a member of the faculty at the Menninger Foundation School of Psychiatry:

> It seems very strange to me that in a few short years, since this program was established, our schools suddenly have 'found' a shocking one million additional children with learning deficits. But then when we consider that those one million children account for about 60 percent of the $930 million federal tax dollars sent to local school districts last year for 'special education,' the reason for that growth becomes clear.

3) Some teachers refer for LD placement students who require anything more than minimal teaching effort, to avoid their teaching responsibilities. Observes Dr. Joseph M. Scandura, Professor of Education and Director of Instructional Systems at the University of Pennsylvania:

> Teachers who have grown up in an atmosphere of unionism are much more concerned with how many minutes they have to stick around after the bell rings than they are with really helping children learn. Instead, children are

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35 Evans, op. cit., p. 11.

36 Education Times, February 13, 1984, p. 6.

37 "Disparities Still Exist in Who Gets Special Education," GAO Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Select Education, Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, September 30, 1981.

> frequently labeled 'learning disabled,' 'lazy,' or whatever, and walked away from. It's easier that way, and it takes less of the teacher's time.

4) LD class enrollments are kept high to guarantee the jobs of LD teachers. In many schools, the number of special needs personnel is rivaling--even outstripping--the number of regular school teachers.

The definition of learning disabilities is notoriously unclear, and there is a tendency to overuse it. According to Dr. Ralph Scott, Director of the Educational Clinic and Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Northern Iowa, "Most school psychologists and special education personnel don't know what they're talking about when they talk about learning disabled children." This leads to many mislabeled, misdiagnosed children--and to their permanent emotional damage.

Laws for the education of the handicapped have drained resources from the normal school population, probably weakened the quality of teaching, and falsely labeled normal children. In a misguided effort to help a few, the many have been injured. Yet the handicapped constituency displays a strange lack of concern for the effect of their regulations upon the welfare of the general population--the very population upon whom the well-being of these children ultimately depends.

The constituency justifies these expensive regulations and their impact on education as necessary to ensure the inclusion of handicapped children in the social mainstream. It appears that no effort has been made to assess the effects of mainstreaming on regular students, although advocates for the handicapped do express "concern" over the alarming rise in the number of children being labeled LD. There has been no effort, however, by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services to redefine the LD category or to drop it from the funding formula.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The essence of public education is the transmission of knowledge. Subsidiary goals--no matter how noble the aim--must not be allowed to undermine this primary function. For two decades, however, advocates for groups with special requirements clearly have been eroding the fundamental goal. If their programs had succeeded with little negative impact on the rest of the student population, all well and good. But the evidence shows they have failed to benefit significantly enough the target populations and have severely limited the educational opportunities of many other children.

Nevertheless, the constituencies favoring the expansion of such federal programs have ignored this evidence--often vilifying those who present it--and have continued to press for more spending

and more controls. They have been able to obtain these objectives largely by applying political pressure to government officials and for legislation far removed from the practical realities of programs.

To provide proper education for the disadvantaged and handicapped--effective help without limiting the opportunities for other children--the power of the "iron triangles" must be broken. Measures must be enacted to return control of education to those who deal with it best--the localities and the parents.

To accomplish this, a number of steps are necessary. Among them:

--Public schools should not be required to educate those children who cannot, without damaging the main purpose of public education, function in a normal classroom setting. Additional expenditures for special school or self-contained classroom placements should be the responsibility of the family and local community. Responsibility for oneself, one's family, and one's neighbors is a fundamental aspect of American social history and a key to the success of American society. When such resources are insufficient, only then should state and federal aid assist local initiatives--without forcing them to comply with mandates from Washington. Federal assistance should be seen as the assistance of last resort, and not a right.

--To fulfill this limited federal obligation, vouchers and tuition tax credits should be considered as a method of meeting the special needs of truly handicapped children, while keeping control of programs and initiatives firmly in the hands of parents. Vouchers would provide an earmarked grant to parents of the handicapped, so that they would have the means to choose between the alternatives--in short, to vote with their dollars.

--The learning disabilities category either should be redefined to reduce substantially the number of children labeled LD or dropped from the funding formula.

--Chapter I should be repealed. It has failed to accomplish its stated aim; input cost is excessively disproportionate to output results; it has created a new deprived group--the highest achievers; and it has weakened the education structure by narrowing what the regular teacher needs to know and do (i.e., how to teach slow students effectively). The way to help educationally deprived, low-income students is to spend the money locally to hire regular teachers who are knowledgeable, persevering, and dedicated to making children learn within the regular classroom. A modified tracking system would be suitable for this purpose.

--The Department of Education should be abolished. It has been the power base from which special interest programs have been imposed upon the nation's schools. To accomplish this, the public must be made aware of the facts surrounding many of the

well-meaning but counterproductive programs supported by the education lobby. Consequently all Departmental programs should be examined closely for their impact on American education and the results made public. A commission on compensatory education and programs for the handicapped, with members chosen by the President, should be established to undertake this difficult assignment and to report back within nine months.

CONCLUSION

It was never intended by the framers of the Constitution that the federal government should become involved in education. Education is not even mentioned in the U.S. Constitution, and, until recently, federal interference in education was viewed as unnecessary and dangerous. Indeed, in 1945 the National Education Association joined with the American Council on Education to issue a proclamation stating that "the trend toward the Federalizing of education is one of the most dangerous on the current scene." The last 20 years have amply demonstrated the legitimacy of this concern.

Control of education must be returned to those who have traditionally dealt with it best: the localities and parents. Most important, however, there needs to be freedom and perspective to examine the facts, serious discussion about the purpose of education, and honest appraisal of the philosophy and policies that have brought education to its knees. There then must be a unified effort to make the changes required.

Reform of the current expensive and ineffective programs can be achieved only if policy makers recognize that centralization of education in Washington has allowed the policy process to be dominated by self-styled advocates who refuse to accept any evidence that challenges the effectiveness of the programs they support. Only by reversing the process of centralization, and thereby denying a power base to such lobbyists, will the handicapped, slow learners, and other students with special needs obtain effective help with minimum disruption to the normal and gifted child.

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